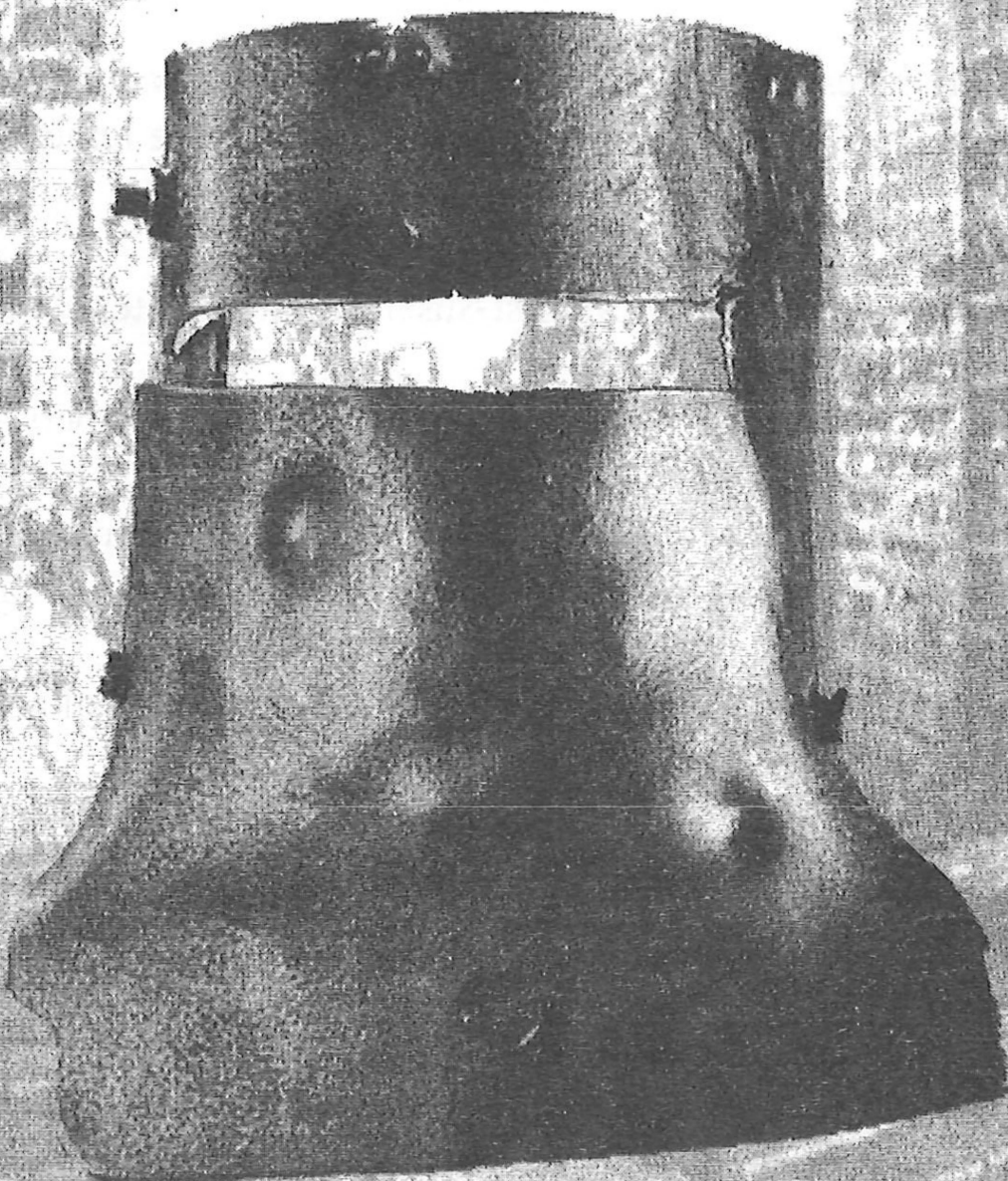


RENEGADE



News



5th November / Vol. 1 / 2010

RENEGADE ACTIVIST ACTION FORCE

On This Day:

Remember, remember the 5th of November.

1605 - The Gunpowder plot set out to assassinate King James 1 by blowing up the house of the lords on its first sitting day of Parliament.

The group of 12 gunpowder plotters is largely portrayed by Guy Fawkes, but the day was planned over many a meetings by these 12 mentioned comrades.

The event did not work out as planned. Fawkes was discovered guarding 36 barrels of gunpowder early on the morning of the 5th. Guy Fawkes was hung, drawn and quartered the following year on Jan 31st but his legacy lives on with many celebrating Guy Fawkes Day every year with fireworks and bonfires.

Fawkes is often described as the only man to enter parliament with honest intentions. To launch this edition of Renegade News, we remember the 5th of November.

1872 – Woman’s suffrage: suffragist Susan Anthony votes for the first time & later fined \$100.

1916 – Everett Massacre Washington up to 12 IWW members are shot dead by cops over the right to march. They marched.

1940 – Franklin Roosevelt elected to 3rd term as American President (was also President of the New York City Boy Scout Association - make of that what you will)

1968 – Richard Nixon elected President of America (died of a stroke but not ‘til ’94)

Born on this Day:

1855 – Eugene V. Debs American Socialist and founding member of the IWW (a great leader, ran a million times for President)

1911 – Roy Rodgers corny American country singer and Actor

1931 – Ike Turner Founding father of Rock n Roll and wife basher (he’s dead now Tina lives)

1941 – Art Garfunkel One half of legendary duo Simon and Garfunkel



1959 – Bryan Adams One of the great ballad writers (no Bon Jovi but gives it a go)

1974 – Jerry Stackhouse NBA journeyman player learnt from Jordan hasn't lived up to hype but still a great player.

1974 – Ryan Adams US singer born same day as Bryan better songwriter

1981 – Paul Chapman AFL star and tough leader 2 premierships, 2 all Australian awards, norm smith medal, best & fairest award cats legen.

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Laid out by Dan Hassan

The opinions expressed in this publication are not necessarily the opinions of RAAF.



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1. Editorial - Why Renegade News?

Welcome to the first edition of Renegade News. RAAF aims to put out a regular paper that will encourage revolutionaries and progressive minded people to think deeply and take action on the issues that affect people's lives. We believe it's crucial to have more critical and constructive discussion on the state of the world and the responses of the left, and we want Renegade News to be a forum for this.

In recent times, we have seen two major military offenses by a 'coalition' of forces (mainly US forces) into Iraq and Afghanistan. Climate change is displacing poor communities in Asia and the Pacific Islands, and is leading to the destruction of ecosystems at an unprecedented rate. The global financial crisis and economic disparity has exacerbated housing crises in countries the world over.

Voters all over the world are clearly fed up with the lack of solutions that two party systems of government have to offer. As a consequence the rate of informal voting has increased, and hung Parliaments have been elected in Australia, England, and Canada. In Australia, the hung Parliament was accompanied by a record vote of 13 percent for the Parliamentary so-called 'left' – the Greens party. This presents opportunities for the left to offer solutions, to try new things, to grow. But sometimes it seems like the left is still reeling in defeat, struggling to be relevant, after the millions-strong anti-war rallies of February 2003 failed to stop the invasion of Iraq. Is it enough to blame undemocratic governments for failing to listen to us? Or is it the case that we failed to offer the right opportunities and take effective types of action to stop the war?

Thank goodness for the Greens! While Andrew Wilkie scored immediate, concrete commitments on hospital funding and poker machines from his negotiations with the ALP, the Greens were content with the deal that a Parliamentary debate would take place on Australia's role in Afghanistan. Preceded by Gillard's ever-so-democratically stated position that Australia is likely to stay in Afghanistan for at least the next tens years, this debate was



not a catalyst for mass action by anti-war protesters, as it could have been. At the moment, in the absence of appropriate action, it seems to be the case that the war will never end.

There have been over 107,000 civilian deaths in Iraq, and at least 14,000 direct civilian deaths as a result of the war in Afghanistan. 21 Australian troops have died in Afghanistan. This is more than in any other war since Vietnam. This war is Australia's second longest military conflict and troops from the US, Australia and other committed nations that return are scarred for life.

During the Vietnam War, Vietnam Veterans Against the War played a massive role in winning over public opinion to withdraw the troops. While there have been fragments of significant resistance by US-based Iraq Veterans Against the War, there needs to be huge support from the left to help develop the political consciousness and confidence of troops in Iraq to resist the war.

Refugees who make it to the borders of invading nations spend years in immigration detention centers, and live with the mental scarring of not only war, but indefinite detention, torture and racism. In Australia, the treatment of refugees and people who arrive without papers, is horrendous.

While millions of people are outraged about the treatment of refugees, about the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, and about climate change, this outrage has not led to effective action in a way that can really change policies in significant ways. We hope to engage in debates about the best way to free refugees, to end the intervention in the Northern Territory, and to stop Australia's involvement in wars.

From December 10th -12th in Sydney, a conference will take place in Sydney to brainstorm new ways of campaigning for refugees. This is a great initiative and we look forward to hearing about the outcomes, campaigns and actions that result from this gathering. For more info, see www.breakoutconference.org



While we are only able to touch on a few issues in this edition, we have pulled together an excellent collection of writings from amazing activists involved in struggle. The contributors to Renegade News have had years of experience as revolutionaries and activists. It's essential for activists to express and reflect on what we're doing, to look beyond ideologically and historically driven limitations on the ways we fight, and find new ways to do things.

What Is RAAF?

There are many different experiences that make us as people and some of these make us want to scream "I am a revolutionary". That lead us to decide to spend a few hours at a rally, go to workshops or dedicate so much of our lives to fighting for a better world. It all starts somewhere.....

We live in a system which tries to divide us, concur us, oppress us and make us feel powerless. This is how they get away with all the shit they do: by creating fears and insecurities that make none of us want to be the odd one out, the 'weakest link'.

Every action however, has an equal and opposite reaction and the Capitalist system demands that we fight against it.

How do we do this? Am I an Anarchist? A Socialist? A Sufi? Catholic? What if I agree with some of the concepts of Socialism but feel at home with Anarchists on the over all picture? Why do I feel the need to be labelled and grouped by an 'ist' or an 'ism'? Why do I need to buy into the whole divide and rule game, why can't I just be I?

Renegade Activist Action Force is of the belief it's not important what people label themselves it's about what you want to do and how you want to do it.



We face the biggest crises the world has seen: a combined ecological and economic disaster has engulfed the world in the few short years most of have been alive. The current economic crisis is the worst since the Great Depression of three quarters of a century ago: since 2007 the world GDP has fallen between four and six per cent, industrial production in developed economies dropped between 15 and 25 per cent, exports collapsed and world trade contracted by over 20 per cent.

Banks have been nationalised or given billions of dollars to survive across the world and even some self labelled right wing economists are admitting that Capitalism as a system is not sustainable.

Everyday someone is telling us yet another way in which the environment is being destroyed: and not just at Friends of the Earth but even Al Gore put out a movie explaining global warming and the leading mainstream scientists agree: we're totally fucked if we keep living like this!

The NT Intervention has taken the war on Indigenous people to a whole new level. Pacific Islands continue to flood, water tables are being degraded, oil is running out, species are being lost, life itself is being perverted by genetic mutations and the heavens themselves have become the new battlegrounds for imperialist wars.

Our Leaders' solution: Try shorter showers! What about Nuclear! Turn you hallway light off! Move production off-shore, gaol the poor, imprison refugees, drive wages down, nationalise the debt and dig another dirty great big fucking hole in the ground!

We need to understand that the System is trying to divide us by any means necessary so that it can prosper like a cancer as we turn on our own.

Why do we fight amongst ourselves? Not just in the activist community, playing games of my ism is better than your ism, but in the broader



When Howard locked up Refugees in prisons in the desert we held rallies, pickets and blockades, some of us cut the fences and people were freed.

Christmas Island is Baxter again but where is the opposition?

The sit ins, occupations, strikes, take-overs, protests, songs, movies, speeches, debate are needed now!

Our lives are stressful. It's hard to find the time to act but if we don't act now, then when? Sometimes we fail to act because we don't think we can change anything. This is blatantly wrong. We have to acknowledge that the answers have not presented themselves to our current, multiple crises. That there is no template solution. No Marx, Engels, Goldman, Bakunin, AFL-CIO/ ACTU, no Union Solidarity or IWW can be applied to fix these crises in a blanket way. We have to acknowledge that we are the ones who will come up with these answers, not because we're better than anyone else, but because we are the ones who give a fuck.

We need to not just shake the foundations and swap one form of systematic repression for another, but rip it apart and make the world our own.

Fill it with Love. A world where ambition is met everyday.
Remind the Earth how to be happy make the world smile again.

We take a big risk to be revolutionaries; to lay our feeling on the line to say enough is enough. To stop the cogs of the machine, to say fuck your rich mans law, fuck your church mans laws, fuck your laws that entrench us deeper and deeper into fear and despair.

Fuck the laws and fuck the fear.

What are we prepared to do?

Build the trust with each other so we can stand side by side. Ask the questions and let us not think that we or they can have all the answers. With good values about treating each other well, good organisation, commitment, dedication and leadership, we can have a real impact.



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We want to train to be strong leaders on multiple levels, in ways that are relevant to the struggles we face. And leadership doesn't just mean individuals rocking the mike with sex appeal at a rally. It doesn't just mean individuals having an analysis that is smarter than everyone else's. What are we? The Young Australians of the Year? We are NOT merely individuals. Together we are imperfect humble workers (waged and unwaged), who have unfortunately internalised the pressures of capitalism. We are all connected in the struggle. Good leadership means the ability to support each other to be strong leaders, to be the best that we can be: as workers, as brothers and sisters, as leaders; politically, spiritually and materially. We want to be good organisers, strategic campaigners, good union delegates, powerful and dynamic public speakers.

Renegade Activists formed in the chill of the NSW forests and Anti-Bicentennial campaigns of the late 1980s. In response to the limitations of labels and isms. Socialists, anarchists, feminists, artists, each from many different organisations and traditions. We were called Renegades in a purjorative sense but took the term meaning not to beholden to any party or organisation, to heart. We nurtured it and developed a network to take on the military at AIDEX 89 & 91, where we had fun appropriating the acronym of the Air Force and driving the 'merchants from the temple' ensuring they did not rise their ugly heads for 17 years.

Seventeen years where RAAF crew were involved in campaigns as divergent as Indigenous solidarity, nukes, anti-militarism, green, social justice and union issues. RAAF crew were involved in the heart of the anti war movement of 2003 and were instrumental in organising the major peace actions from Melbourne to New York. When the arms dealers did reappear in 2007, planning a major arms expo in Adelaide in 2008, we came together again under the RAAF name and this time got them running before they even unpacked.

In 2010 RAAF organised 2 successful benefit gigs that raised thousands of dollars for the campaign to stop the Northern Territory Intervention. In July, we organised a hundreds-strong anti-racism rally at Flinders Street Station, to counter a threat of fascists gathering (they didn't). We worked with the Melbourne Anti-Intervention Collective to picket the Federal Department



of Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FahCSIA). We organised a conference at Camp Eureka to plan our campaigns and actions. We initiated and sustained campaigns that regularly carry out direct actions on the issues of housing (City Is Ours), and workers rights (Workers Solidarity Network).

Renegade Activists don't have all the answers, but we do know most of the questions. We don't claim to be better than anyone else, but want to work with everyone wanting to create the world we all want to live in.

With love and joy we're ready to take on the world through diverse and direct action, let's try and have some fun along the way.

If you want to join in Buy the ticket and enjoy the ride.

Renegade Activist Action Force

'Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries which are coming upon you. Your riches have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten. ...Behold, the pay of the labourers who mowed your fields and which you have withheld, cries out against you; and the outcry of the harvesters has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth. You have lived luxuriously on the earth and led a life of wanton pleasure; you have fattened your hearts in a day of slaughter.' **5:1-6 Apostle James** (son of thunder)



Take Back the Land: Eviction Resistance on the flip side of La La Land

By Liz Turner

We've all seen the images on TV of parts of America portrayed as a 'third world country'. Class inequalities are stark in the country with such minimal welfare, health care and housing support, where the private market rules and destroys lives and is the only economic system that people know. Most Americans, like the people who live around NW 19th Ave Miami Florida, near the central organising space of Take Back the Land, aren't lucky enough to live in Hollywood or some equivalent fantasy la la land.

Before the global financial crisis, the US banks lent money like it grew on trees. And with these loan conditions and interest rates, the more they lent, the more it grew on trees... for the banks that is. When the sub-prime mortgage market crashed and lay-offs became a common story across the country, the imaginary world of credit was exposed for what it is. The banks evicted thousands of families. For the banks, money continued to grow on trees. Companies like Wells Fargo received huge payouts from the Obama administration to return properties to residents who were now unable to pay off their massive mortgages. But instead of doing this, the banks pocketed the cash.

Take Back the Land is a national direct-action housing movement in the USA that has won hearts and minds all over the world by taking on major banks and assisting struggling African American families to squat homes that have been foreclosed. The campaign has featured heavily in the mainstream media in the US, and also featured in Mike Moore's latest film *Capitalism, A Love Story*. I spoke with Max Rameau about methods for ending the housing crisis, and the tension between radical direct action, and winning over the middle ground of public opinion.



LT: Explain your day to day work with Take Back the Land

MR: We scout for vacant government owned and foreclosed homes. We drive around street by street and find places that are not occupied. Sometimes we go inside them to find out what condition they're in. Does it look like someone is working on it, or if it's actively for sale or if it's just sitting there vacant. And then we assess them, we give them a ranking. There's another group of people that vet the homes to find out if they're individually owned. If they're owned by a little old lady down the street, then we leave it. But if it's either foreclosed or government owned, then we put it on our list for someone to use, assuming it's in good condition.



Families get in contact with us to let us know what situation they're in and if they want our help. We interview them and find out if they're a right match for us and if we're a right match for them. A lot of the time it's not a right match because the families aren't ready to accept the kind of services that we offer.

The rest of the time we spend developing theory of what we're doing and why we're doing it, and planning out what we're doing and what the next phase of our struggle is. Lately we've been spending more time working on the national campaign to build the national Take Back the Land Movement.

LT: In your work, is there a tension between direct action on the one hand, and lobbying and winning over mainstream public opinion on the other hand? Do you think that the two necessarily rely on one another for the whole campaign to work?



MR: Frankly, there is a tension. There's really no way to avoid this tension. For the people who are involved in direct action, there can be a tendency to engage in escalating action, which really doesn't result in big wins for the majority of people. But the only thing we're doing with our direct action is housing individual families, and there are literally hundreds of thousands of families who need help in the US. The scope of this crisis is as much proof as anything that there needs to be a broader public policy shift, a fundamental one to be sure, not tinkering around the edges, around making housing a human right. There's a danger that the direct action people will just do direct action for the sake of doing it, without grounding it in public policy initiatives that will benefit the majority of people.

On the direct opposite side, there's a danger that public policy people will be going for victories, but not necessarily victories that are grounded politically or ideologically, and therefore could look like progress, but don't mean anything. So the two are going to have a tension because they will both have a tendency to go in opposite directions. But the tension is both what makes them go in opposite directions, and what makes them benefit one another. The direct action people have to create space for public policy wins, and the public policy people have to make wins based on what the direct action is doing and the space that it's creating.



So the two have to work together. The challenge for the social justice movement during this global, historic crisis, is for those who are on the direct action side, and the public policy side, to figure out a way to work together. Because the movement is not about direct action, it is not

about public policy. It's about advancing human conditions. If you don't do that, then you're not working for others, you're working for yourself.



LT: What do you think are the main shifts in policy that need to take place?

MR: Firstly, it's important to acknowledge that there needs to be a massive policy shift that can only come from a massive, widespread, mainstream movement. So I'd like to think that millions of people would be engaged in the debate and action about what exactly needs to change. I'm personally not a public policy expert, I prefer to do direct action. But there needs to be a change in squatting laws, to recognise the legitimacy of the actions of the thousands of people who choose to sleep in an empty house, rather than under a bridge. There's going to have to be a massive hand over of bank-owned housing stock to land trusts, community cooperatives or any entities that happen to develop, that can allow people to make decisions about the land in their communities.

Liz Turner is an active member of RAAF and a founding member of the City Is Ours direct action housing group.



By Iain McIntyre

Whether it's via rising rents, rooming house closures, mortgage stress, homelessness or a range of other problems, the housing crisis affects millions of Australians. Whilst the media regularly covers horror stories with moral outrage, and housing sector workers do what they can to ameliorate the problem, there have been few responses in the form of grassroots protest and direct action.

The City Is Ours formed in the middle of the year to organise direct action as well as speak out on issues that government funded bodies and people in precarious housing situations cannot. We are a small collective based in Melbourne. Our members include renters, squatters, sole parents, public housing tenants, pensioners, housing workers and others concerned with the rising cost of living and the shrinking range of housing options available to low income people.

In order to bring the government to account and to push community responses the need for green housing and real consumer protection the City Is ours has organised a series of public meetings under the banner of "No More Band-aid Solutions: End The Housing Crisis." The first was held at Trades Hall on October 14 and saw 50 people join speakers from the 20th Man Fund, Council of Single Mothers and their Children and the Hotham Mission Asylum Seekers Project to discuss the crisis and grassroots solutions to it.

Further meetings in St Albans, Broadmeadows and other suburbs are being held throughout October and November. These will culminate in a rally outside Housing Minister Dick Wynne's office (112 Smith St, Collingwood) on Friday November 12th to demand:

- Greatly expanded investment in public housing
- Legislation to limit rent increases
- An end to illegal evictions
- An improvement in standards for rooming houses & the prosecution of rogue operators
- Increased funding for housing cooperatives
- Support for green housing
- More research into sustainable infrastructure improvement and alternative living options (such as housing cooperatives)
- An end to privatisation and the corporate control of housing

The rally will feature speakers, food, MC Rod Quantock and music and people are being asked to bring percussion in order to “drum the Housing Minister Out.”

The City Is Ours first action took place on May 1st when we dropped a banner reading “Rising Rents = Rising Homeless” from the seventh floor of an overpriced apartment block across from Flinders Street train station. The action was taken in solidarity with similar events being held across the US by the Take Back The Land group (takebacktheland.org) and highlighted the rental rip offs taking place in Melbourne, including landlords charging \$480 a week for tiny spaces in the building from which the banner was hung.

The group then revised and update the 2010 Melbourne Squatters Handbook before adding it to our website. The Handbook includes information on how to find an empty property, locating its owner, doing repairs, dealing with the



law and much more.

In July the City Is Ours supported Anthony Arthur after he and his dog Princess were left homeless following the closure of their Brunswick rooming house. Tony had been denied help from council housing services and had been forced to camp out in parks around Moreland.

In spite of rain and hail we protested out the front of the Moreland Council meeting on Wednesday July 14th. The key demand was action on Tony's situation as well as more government funding to put rooming houses into public hands, and ensure that they meet standards under the *Residential Tenancies Act*, as well as Health and Building laws. This would necessarily require greater accountability and reduced rents, pegged at 25% of residents' incomes.

Tents were set on the Coburg Town Hall lawn to place the issue of homelessness front and square before the council and the tens of thousands of cars driving down Bell Street that night and the next morning. A group of local rooming house residents facing eviction and paying up to \$180 a week to live in unregistered, overcrowded and substandard accommodation joined the gathering. Food Not Bombs provided dinner, the City Is Ours created a banner and helped with organisation and members of collectives and organisations such as the Council to Homeless Persons, Industrial Workers of the World, Socialist Party, Flat Out, Renegade Activists, Salvation Army and others joined the protest through the evening. The protest received coverage in the local paper and on Fox FM, MMM, RRR, MTR and Community Radio 3CR.

In response to the demonstration and sleep out the Mayor of Moreland invited Tony in for dinner and asked him to address the council. Tony outlined his situation, and that of others living in sub-standard rooming houses in Moreland. Whilst supporting the council's moves to enforce minimum standards for rooming house residents he called on them to sign the State Government's Rooming House Closure Protocol, which would ensure that local councils assist residents to find alternative and appropriate accommodation when rooming houses close.



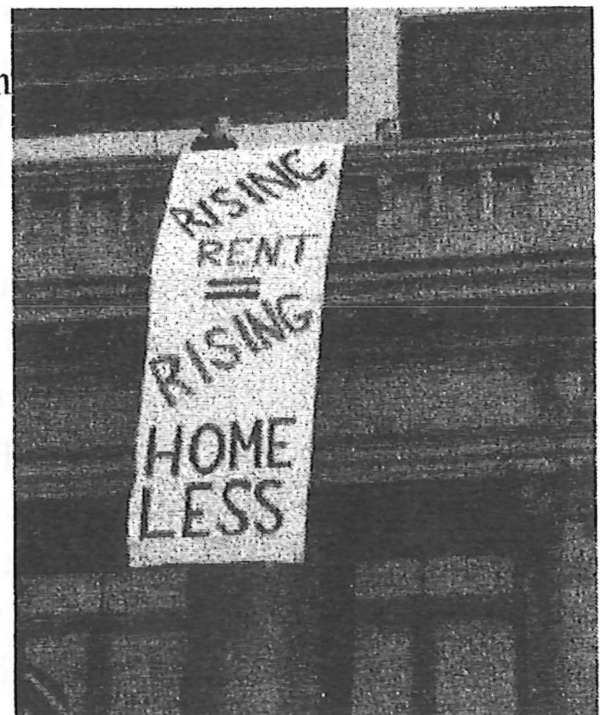
Following the Federal election, in which barely a peep was heard about housing, we decided to highlight the inaction and duplicity of Victorian politicians during the run up to the state election. Under successive conservative and ALP governments Victorians have seen their rental rights stripped and public housing privatised whilst the government palms off the provision of low-income housing to charities and companies, and in doing so, avoids direct responsibility and boosts private revenues.

Clearly more concerned with raking in stamp duties and helping real estate agents and construction companies to keep profits rising the ALP has allowed public housing waiting list to grow to more than 41,000. This is despite 23,299 people being counted as homeless in the 2006 census and 58,600 men, women and children accessing Victorian homelessness services in 2008-09.

With the polls looming and a number of inner city seats at risk, ALP politicians have developed a sudden interest in low-income housing and started meeting with the Housing bodies they have ignored since the last election. Given their track record, their ability or desire to follow through on the various promises they have made has to be treated with scepticism. Even if they do supply the extra houses and rooming house beds they are promising 10 000s will remain without secure or affordable housing.

Following the rally City Is Ours members plan to turn their attention to others responsible for the Housing Crisis. If you'd like to get involved or want to find out more about us visit www.melbournecio.org

Iain McIntyre is the author of the books *How to Make Trouble And Influence People*, and *Always Look on the Bright Side of Life*, and has authored a pamphlet about eviction resistance by the unemployed workers movement from 1929-1936, titled *Lock Out the Landlords*.



RALLY

**NO MORE BAND-AID SOLUTIONS
END THE HOUSING CRISIS**



**FRIDAY 12TH NOVEMBER, 4:30PM
112 SMITH STREET, COLLINGWOOD
HOUSING MINISTER RICHARD WYNNE'S OFFICE**

BYO DRUMS, TENTS & BAND-AID PROPS

MC Rod Quantock and prominent speakers will tell us how the housing crisis is impacting on vulnerable people. Set up camp and drum Dick Wynne out of office.

Organised by City Is Ours
www.melbournecio.org

Events endorsed by Community Radio 3CR, Communications Workers Union Victoria, Renegade Activists Action Force (R.A.A.F.), Fitzroy Legal Service, Friends of the Earth, Green Renters, Earthsharing, Socialist Party, Homeless Front, Socialist Alliance, 20th Man Fund, Freedom Socialist Party, Food Not Bombs, Revolutionary Socialist Party, Unitarian Church.



By John Cleary

The following article provides descriptions of some workplaces in Venezuela that are implementing various models of workers' control. The editors call for critical discussion about Chavez's regime and wish to engage with debate about ways forward for revolutionary movements under Socialist governments.

This article is based on research of Julia Mariano Pereira who studied the workers movement while working at the Centro Internacional Miranda in Caracas, and on visits to workplaces and discussions with workers in a wide variety of workplaces in Venezuela with brigades organised by the Australia Venezuela Solidarity network between 2005 and 2010.

Under the leadership of President Hugo Chavez, Venezuela is in a process of transformation from its present capitalist economy to a socialist state. They describe the socialism they want to create as Socialism of the 21st Century.

The exact nature of this vision of socialism is not clearly defined, but is seen as different to that in other countries that have been described as socialist in the 20th century, such as the Soviet Union, China, Vietnam, or Cuba.

But some principles are clearly established; it is opposed to the neo liberal vision of capitalism, and the economy must work for all of the people, not just for the wealthy. Venezuela has totally rejected the model of the World Bank and the IMF. All the key industries such as oil, aluminium, steel and electricity are in the hands of the state, and can be used to benefit the people, rather than capitalists or transnational corporations. Billions of dollars, particularly from the oil industry, have been redirected to meet community needs. There have been massive programs in education, health, housing, land redistribution, and support for new options for work, particularly co-operatives.

Central to all discussions about its future is a call for a truly democratic Venezuela, with its people taking a protagonist role in the process. At the level of representative democracy, Venezuelans participate in numbers not seen in other countries. Around 70% vote in the many and frequent elections that have been held since Chavez first came to power. The most developed form of participatory democracy is in the Communal Councils, of which there are thousands across the country, making decisions on matters that affect their own lives.

However, with the exception of the cooperative movement, until now there has been little development of democracy in the workplace. There is now widespread acceptance that as work is a central part of workers lives, this area too must become democratic to construct a new society.

Workers control has been discussed in the labour movement of Ven  zuela for a considerable time, and has taken a variety of forms in practice. There are 3 different phases in the development of workers control and the involvement of workers in the management of their workplaces.

The need for workers to take over their workplaces became an imperative for many workers after the coup and subsequent lockout in 2002 and 2004. During this lockout thousands of workplaces were shut down by the employers in an attempt to fatally damage the economy and bring down the government of President Chavez. It was the actions of oil workers who restored the industry after the management of the state owned company sabotaged and shut down production. At Alcasa, a large aluminium plant in Guayana, bosses, with the police, locked out workers and turned the power off. Without power the molten aluminium would set hard and irrevocably damage the factory. This act of sabotage was reversed by the workers with the aid of thousands of students and the National Guard, and the workers took over the factory and commenced a process they called co-gestion or co- management. The plant made a profit in this first year for the only time in the last 20 years. A change of union leadership in 2007 to a group based on narrow economic politics has effectively stymied the process, and the plant is losing money again. Currently there is new push for workers control in all the heavy industries of iron, steel and aluminium under Plan Socialista Guayana.

At Inverval, a plant that repaired large valves for the oil industry, workers took over the factory and introduced a very advanced form of workers control. They elected their own management, introduced a flat pay structure with everyone on the same wages, and all decisions are made by a general assembly of workers. They firmly believe that all new takeovers should be on the basis of 100% state ownership, 100% workers control. Unfortunately Inveval has only one customer, PDVSA, the national oil company, and management there have not supported the factory. Inveval has functioned mainly as a community centre with running social missions such as Mision Ribas and Mision Robinson. The workers are now discussing diversifying



into other products using the skills and the equipment they have.

At Invepal, a paper plant in Moron, workers took over the factory after a long struggle, and formed a cooperative with the Government supplying money and holding 51% ownership and the workers 49%. They too adopted a flat management structure with elected management and equal pay for all. As nationalisations and worker takeovers continued, the model supported by the Government has changed. Initially it was the model of Invepal, in response to worker takeover or disputes, and employers abandoning factories. The government moved to Nucleos de Desarrollas Endogenes (NUDE) (Nucleii of Endogenous Development), which were also cooperatives that were developed to meet local and national needs, based on regional characteristics, needs and existing skills.

Today, the model supported by the Government is for 100% government ownership and 100% workers control.

In Guayana, there have been significant developments since the nationalisation of Sidor, a giant steel plant. Last year Chavez called for increased worker involvement in their workplaces. This year workers were elected to a panel, and 2 were appointed by Chavez as managers of CVG (an industry body that oversees the iron ore, steel and aluminium industries of Guayana). Workers have developed Plan Socialista Guayana, which is a strategic plan to revolutionise these industries, and introduce workers control. They are currently working in mesas de trabajo to work on the implementation of this plan. On workers control there is much discussion on the form it will take, and they are examining past experiences such as the Workers Soviets of 1917, the writings of Gramsci, and the participatory budgeting of Puerto Alegre in Brazil. What is obvious is that workers control is the hot topic of discussion at the moment.

At the same time there are many workplaces that have been nationalised or taken over that are working under workers control. For example at Norpro, which produces small pellets from bauxite that are used in oil drilling, has been taken over after a dispute and departure of the private owners. Workers have instituted workers control, have rehabilitated the plant, and are about to recommence production. The same has occurred at Friosa, which supplies 80% of the food to Guayana.

In September 2010, the National Union of Workers (UNT) decided to reverse their previous opposition to workers councils, and now support their



development alongside unions in the workplace. Unions should fulfil their traditional role of bargaining for workers and protecting their entitlements, and workers councils will ultimately be the new form of management in workplaces.

Legislation is in the National Assembly to give workers councils legal status and detail their rights and responsibilities.

The advances in workers control of their workplaces is an important step in the transition from a capitalist economy to a new form of democratic and participative socialism that is occurring in Venezuela today.

John Cleary is a long-time union activist who has travelled extensively to Venezuela.



By Jacob Grech

Living in Australia, it's hard to get your head around imagining a place like Gaza. Its about 41 km long and between 6 and 12 km wide: think of it as the bit of land bounded by the Monash Freeway and the Bay, with Melbourne at one end and Frankston at the other.

It has an 11 km border with Egypt on the Sinai Peninsula and is otherwise completely surrounded on land by its 51 km border with Israel, who also controls its 40 km coastline.

In this small piece of land of 360 square kilometres of sand covered plain live one and a half million Palestinians, a million of whom are refugees, with about 400 000 living in UN refugee camps.

The Gaza Strip, like the West Bank, is occupied by the State of Israel in contravention of a raft of UN resolutions including UNSC Resolution 242. In addition since June 2007, the Gaza Strip has been under an Israeli military and economic blockade, stopping basic food, medical, construction and other supplies from entering. Israel also controls all population registries thereby exercising control on all aspects of life on the Strip.

The mainstream international community has done nothing to stop Israel's occupation and attacks on the Gaza Strip, which amount to worse human rights abuses than perpetrated by Saddam Hussein's regime or the Taliban, both of which have been used as the excuse for a decade of war and occupation.

In particular, the Australian Government has been one of Israel's most vocal supporters. Indeed, our new Prime Minister is an inaugural member of the Australia-Israel Leadership Forum, which was founded by her partner Tim Mattheison's employer, Melbourne Property Developer Albert Dadon.

While other countries have at least made mild statement's against the illegal blockade, Australia has remained so silent that even former Australian Ambassadors to Israel, have questioned Australia's silence on the blockade. Peter Rodgers (Ambassador 1994-97) stated in June this year that "There's



been a marked swing away from the old attempt to be even-handed on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to a much more determined pro-Israeli position, and I think Gillard is part of that.”

But this situation has been going on for years, with Australia repeatedly voting with the US (and the US Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau and Micronesia) in supporting Israel regardless of the issue. Though this trend looked like changing under PM Rudd with his mild concern over stolen Australian passports and the boarding of the peace flotilla along with abstaining in UN votes, shortly before he was shafted in June.

In addition to support in the UN, Australia is one of the few countries in the world that recognises Israel as a developing country, thereby providing tax rebates for so called charities which send money to Israel to build illegal settlements in the Occupied Territories: this tax rebate amounts to Australia financing the building of illegal settlements, resulting in the removal of Palestinian families, the destruction of Palestinian infrastructure and the abuse of Palestinian’s human rights, which in turn exacerbates the problems in the Middle East and adds to the number of displaced Palestinian refugees.

Australia also maintains military ties with Israel and this year Minister for Defence Personnel Materials and Science, Greg Combet, announced that the Israeli arms company, Elbit has been awarded the contract to provide “Battle Group and Below Command Control and Communications Systems (BGC3)”. This means that from 2012, the Australian military will use a communications system ‘on the ground’ which was developed, tried and tested illegally in the Occupied Territories against Palestinian civilians and further strengthen and legitimise the Israeli military industry.

About this time last year, long time Renegade Activist, Gareth Smith, was preparing to join the Gaza Freedom March over the New Year. Marching with over 1300 activists from 43 countries calling on Israel to lift the siege on Gaza. Unfortunately (but hardly surprisingly) the Egyptian Government stopped the march from getting to the border and Gareth arrived back early in the year with wounds to his leg from Egyptian police brutality which still cause a problem. Renegade Activists were also involved in assisting with the



Melbourne protests resulting from Israel's piratical boarding of the Peace Flotilla attempting to take humanitarian aid into Gaza this May.

While of course we will continue to join with the international campaign against Israel's war crimes in Occupied Palestine, our primary role is to oppose the Australian Government's complicity in these crimes: complicity which in effect means that these crimes are being perpetrated in our names. To this end we look forward to working with Palestinian communities and their supporters in Australia in their aspirations for peace and justice in the Middle East.

Jacob Grech is a founding member of RAAF and long time activist fighting for peace and the rights of Palestinians

Can I Take Your Order?

By Ben Fuller

There's a well founded assumption within the hospitality culture that most workers are not employed in their preferred career. "So, what else do you do Ben?" is a question I expect to be asked every time I start a new job in a restaurant or café.

During my ten years in the industry I've met countless actors and musicians trying to get regular work or a break of some kind, immigrants working for permanent residency or unable to find employment in their field of expertise, and students (studying just about anything but hospitality, although I have met some of those too, but never one who finished the course, excluding chefs). It begs the question, why do so few actually choose hospitality preferred career path. The answer might seem obvious but it reveals a few worrying concerns about the standards of the industry in general.

My own story is the oldest one in the book. I got into the industry in 2000 when I moved to Melbourne from Perth, after completing my training in musical theatre at WAAPA (Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts). Hopeful of a career on stage and film I soon found myself waiting tables, making coffee or pulling beers to pay the rent. It's such a cliché. I



sometimes lie awake at night wondering how in the hell I fell for it. But I was not alone. And in some ways it makes sense for an aspiring artist to be doing a job which offers flexible rosters and staff meals.

There's a transient nature to that kind of work. People come and go, take time off for exams or gigs, disappear, reappear as a changed person. But most people tend to fall into it by default because there's work available to almost anyone, regardless of training or previous experience.

Unfortunately there are quite a few downsides to this kind of existence. There's the low wages and lack of benefits like holiday and sick pay. In cases of cash in hand arrangements there's no superannuation, work cover, or even evidence of employment. The hours can be long and tiring, and conditions are sometimes unsafe. It's also stressful at times, and dead boring at others. This set of conditions puts hospitality workers in the lowest socio-economic bracket of the employed population of Australia.

There are also subsequent impacts on other areas of workers' lives as a result of these conditions. There's self-esteem issues and a sense of failure, which can lead to depression, addiction, and generally poor overall health habits. Workers are often treated with condescension or disrespect by customers and even co-workers, and cop complaints and abuse which should be directed at someone else, simply because they are the nearest person around.

I have found it a huge challenge to juggle doing enough hours to pay the bills with working on a theatre or music project, which is often unpaid, and getting enough rest and exercise to have the energy to cope with that kind of life and not get run down or unmotivated.

Ironically, it is the individuals I've met working these kinds of jobs who have been a source of inspiration and comradeship during some of the tougher times. I've met musicians to collaborate with I've met free spirits to celebrate with. And I've met activists to rise up with.

Ben Fuller is an active member of RAAF and has provided awesome entertainment at many RAAF events.



Laws Made to be Broken: the Workers Solidarity Network and Workplace Laws

By Emma Kerin

The Melbourne Workers Solidarity Network was established in June this year with the experience of Union Solidarity behind it and the Labor Government's Fair Work Australia ahead of it. Since then its loose form of membership has continued to grow. Fundamentally, Workers Solidarity Network is active because of the belief that true social and political equality is unachievable without democracy in the workplace. Over the past 18 months, Workers Solidarity Networks have also been established in Sydney, Canberra, Wollongong and Newcastle.

Workers Solidarity Network (WSN) has agreed upon several things; it is a group for direct action, it supports workers in struggle, it supports those workers who are not traditionally unionised, and people can become members by showing up and being active. It is a group with the ability to encompass all politically progressive and active people.

Three working groups look after media, finance and infrastructure and an organising committee keeps the administration of the group alive as well as being points of contact. This committee is rotating and all members are recallable. After an initial two meetings a constitution was created, followed by a code of conduct. All these facets of the organisation are intrinsic to the continuation of a broad and supportive group. However, most importantly, the group is focussed on *doing things*.

WSN will support workers on picket lines and at protest rallies, will distribute flyers to local communities and help to spread information. The actions of WSN are always defined by the intentions of the workers.

Union Solidarity was established in 2004/2005, in response to John Howard's industrial extremism. Intensifying the Hawke era's IR laws, 45 D and E, the secondary boycott laws completely undermined Australian workers' ability to strike in order to defend their rights. Secondary



boycott laws aim to prevent third parties from striking in support of workers.

Currently, as under WorkChoices, employers are able to; for example, hire a new truck company to continue making deliveries when the drivers of their nominal truck company refuse to break a strike. But at the same time workers at that striking factory have no equivalent right to request or accept assistance from another workplace or union in order to halt production and force negotiations.

After the 2007 Liberal defeat many hoped for a reversal of WorkChoices, as promised by Kevin Rudd and Julia Gillard. As was to be expected, three years on, the Fair Work Act continues to place the power to make decisions in the hands of employers – because workers remain unequal. Secondary boycott laws still stand. There is still prohibitive right of entry legislation. Protected Action inhibits the ability of workers to use their labour as a tool by which to negotiate with employers because of the restrictive red tape in the application process and, in many cases, the inability to actually stop people and vehicles from breaking a strike.

WSN aims, through community engagement, to restore the power to negotiate and make decisions for our communities in the hands of the workers who deliver our post, make our clothes, build our cities, produce our whitegoods, nurse our sick and teach our children. In other words: all of us.

In July this year, WSN members stood side by side with workers from Kennon Auto, a textiles manufacturing plant in Preston. For two and a half weeks, WSN helped to rally troops and raise community awareness to lend support to the picket.

Sometimes a law is only changed when it is ignored or broken. There are many examples of community civil disobedience throughout history; in the defence of working rights, civil rights, environmental protection and land rights. Until unions again have the power to represent workers collectively, community involvement in industrial relations will continue.

Emma Kerin is a journalist and founding Committee member of the WSN.



She worked tirelessly to gain community support for the Kennon Auto Picket in Preston in July 2010. The workers won. The WSN is engaged in ongoing debate about the role of the network in relation to the existing organised labour movement.

Workers Solidarity Network, Wollongong

by Lindsay Hawkins

First published in Broad Left, Illawarra newsletter; <http://broadleft.net/>

The first meeting of Workers' Solidarity Network (WSN) – Wollongong took place on 19 Sept. at a home in Keiraville. WSN has commenced operating in a number of Australian cities this year with the aim of supporting grassroots organising and workers engaged in struggle with their bosses. A small number of local activists met to investigate the viability of such a group operating in Wollongong. Issues discussed included how to make a difference recognising the limited resources and small number of interested people at this early stage of the group's existence, how to support existing struggles and work with the official union structure and how to relate to largely non-unionised sectors of the workforce such as young workers and students in an environment that is much more heavily casualised and precarious now than in times past. It was felt that the group had the potential to make an important contribution to local struggles and will meet again on Sunday, 24 October, 2pm - venue to be announced.



By Joe Lorback

On Friday 29 October around 500 people gathered on the steps of the State Library to protest against the racist Northern Territory Intervention. It was the largest demonstration against the Intervention to take place in Melbourne since Howard sent the troops in 3 and a half years ago.

After over an hour and a half of speakers the rally took off down Swanston St chanting 'Jenny Macklin you disgust us! Equal right and jobs with justice!' the rally concluded with a defiant sit-down in the middle of the Bourke and Swanston St intersection.

On the same day protests took place in Brisbane, Sydney and Alice Springs.

On the back of increasing support from trade unions and actions like the strikes at Dagaragu and Kalkaringi, the campaign against the Intervention is developing much needed momentum to respond to the disgusting racist paternalism that is devastating Aboriginal communities in the NT.

The large turn-out of people was a positive sign that the campaign against the Intervention is growing. And the desire and determination of those sitting at the intersection showed that many want to do more than listen to speakers. They were already converted and wanted to make their opposition to the Intervention known.

The failure to direct this energy in an effective way to consolidate the campaign and show solidarity with those battling the Intervention in the NT highlights the need for the campaign to begin more direct actions targeting those overseeing and profiting from the Intervention.

The rally was organised by the Melbourne Anti-Intervention Collective (MAIC). To get involved or find out about the campaign against the Intervention go to one of their meetings every Monday at 6.30pm at the New International Book Shop in Trades Hall, Carlton,



email melbourneaic@gmail.com or go to maicollective.blogspot.com

Joe Lorback is an active member of RAAF. He is a founding member of the Melbourne Anti Intervention Collective (MAIC) and has just completed a thesis on Aboriginal workers' strikes.



Why we support Socialist Party member Stephen Jolly at the State election.

In RAAF, we prioritise direct action in our campaigns. We are cynical about Parliamentary politics and understand that millions of others are too. We were not surprised to see a sharp rise in informal voting to 5.64 per cent at the recent Federal election. It's a widely known fact that most politicians are overpaid liars who act for themselves and waste other peoples taxes implementing decisions that we would never have agreed to if we'd actually had a say. An appropriate response to politicians' claims that we give them a 'mandate,' is to not vote or to vote informally. But as a group, we share the sentiments of Max Rameau from Take Back the Land: activists who only prioritise direct action and ignore wider strategies for policy reform that will improve the lives of millions, are, like politicians, acting for themselves, not for the wider community.

Voting for Steve Jolly is not in and of itself engaging with wider strategies for policy reform that will improve the lives of millions. But Steve, unlike most other politicians to ever have existed in the history of the world, holds a sound anti-capitalist position on social and economic issues. The Socialist Party place high priority on direct action and they get results because for the SP, direct action takes place in conjunction with real demands that get real benefits for people's lives. They have conducted picket lines with underpaid workers in fast food and retail, who are ignored by the registered trade unions, while simultaneously successfully supporting these workers through the 'official channels' to secure back-pay.

Here are some words by the SP that explain a political rationale for voting for Jolly if you live in the state electorate of Richmond.

With a second financial crisis looming it is likely that the next government will be forced to implement austerity measures in order to reduce debt and maintain their credit rating. Already in South Australia the Labor State government is planning to slash almost 4000 jobs and introduce a raft of other cuts. Budgets of this character can be expected in Victoria and nationally in the years to come.



The Greens have already publically stated that they will ensure supply and confidence to a minority Government regardless of the content of the budget. This runs counter to their claims of providing a progressive alternative to voters. You can not claim to be socially progressive on the one hand while refusing to rule out propping up the budget slashers on the other.

It's not a real solution to support the Greens at the polls. The Greens in the City of Yarra backed Local Law 8, banning indigenous people from drinking on Smith Street, thereby driving local indigenous people out of public view and into the back streets. Part of The Greens solution to climate change is to support corporate welfare for privately run renewable energy projects, regardless of the kind of management structure, wages or conditions for workers. At any rate, Greens Candidate for the seat of Richmond, Kathleen Maltzahn, has a low profile amongst local residents, simply because she has not put in the hard yards campaigning for residents' rights. It's Steve, not Kathleen, who has support public housing tenants to form their own residents' action groups to confront the Office of Housing about cockroaches and rats. It's Steve, not Kathleen, who many residents know on a personal level.

On Friday 12th November at the Bella Union Bar, Trades Hall, The Socialist Party will have a benefit gig to raise money for Steve's election campaign. Raise A Red Star Over Richmond will feature a battle between RAAF DJs, J Rev V Comrade Dubs



By James Brennan

I was blown away when I first heard Dead Prez, then blown away again when I saw them live earlier this year at the espy in St.Kilda. But their album with DJ Green Lantern I thought was disappointing. It lacked the edge of “RBG” and “Let’s get free” There simply aren’t the party tracks to put on the stereo.

Lantern also did Immortal Techniques album “The 3rd World” which has some good tracks, some ok tracks, and a couple of killers. But Technique and DP are Hip Hop legends in my book. They bring so much to the table that I don’t feel Lantern can deliver.

This new Mixtape (available free to download from www.deadprez.com I’m happy to say is a return to form from DP. It’s a wakeup call to Hip Hop, calling out the phonies and telling artists “If you wanna be a rapper you better study Malcom, Garvey, Huey.”

This is the Album America needs right now! It cuts through all the bullshit about Obama, cause Democrat or Republican they’re still serving the same interests. “Now the only thing that’s gunna save us is revolution.”

Hip Hop has become the most popular form of music on the planet and rapping in its pure form doesn’t need money to buy an instrument so anyone can do it.

The media often attack Hip Hop for sexist or homophobic lyrics which are sometimes there, but when there is so much of something, there are bound to be good and bad elements of it.

Great music has often come from black culture and black struggle, from the blues and jazz, to reggae and hip hop. Dead Prez are pioneers of a new struggle in a time when they’re critiquing a black President in their raps.



“It might not be good news but it sure is the hood news.” Dead Prez remain a voice of the people. They understand the struggle because they’re part of it. “Everybody going through the struggle like us.” We need more artists prepared to not just call themselves revolutionaries but to *be* revolutionaries.

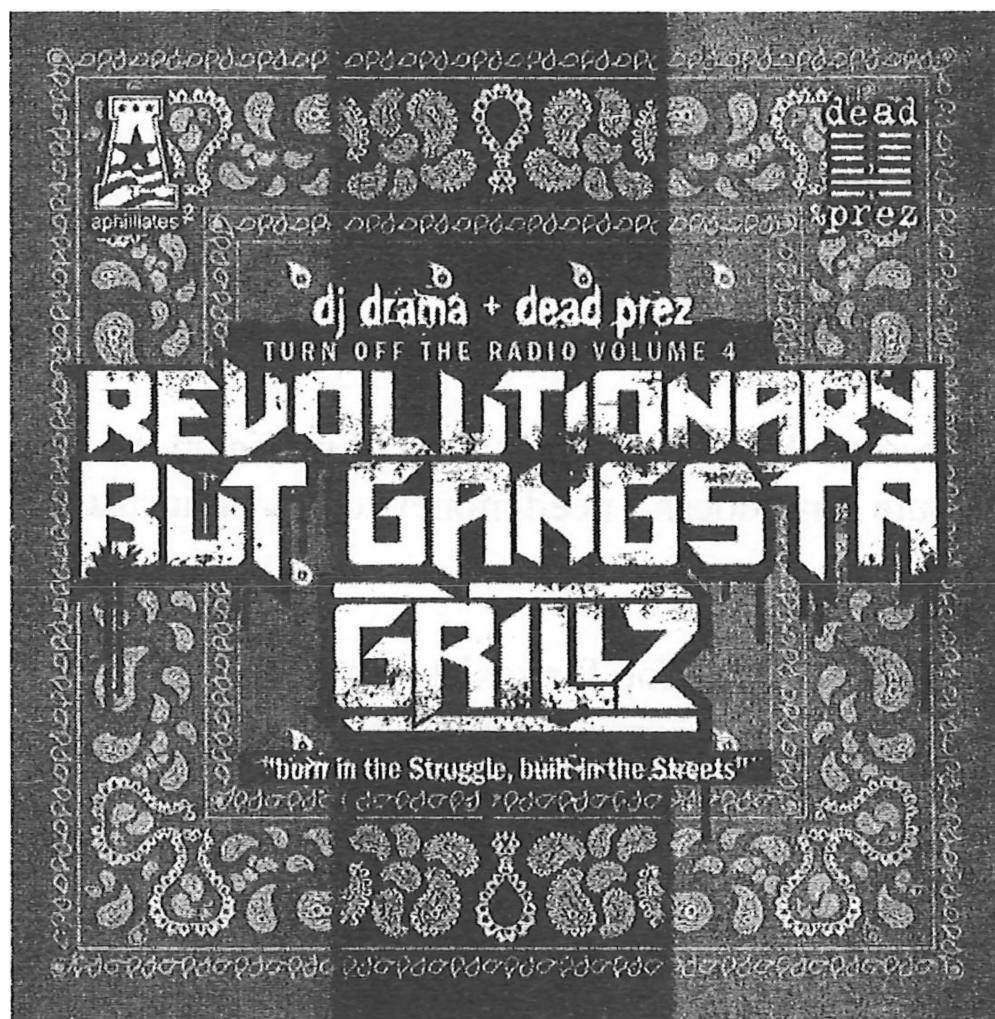
“I’m reporting for duty. I live, I die, I organise everything I do I revolutionise.”

Follow these links for a two part interview with M1 from Dead Prez and Aboriginal activist Robbie Thorpe with Renegade Activists James and Joe

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GWvMyxSZVuw>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P81i4E8RnBA>

By James Brennan,
Renegade Activist, Hip Hop Devotee



Re-printed from Melbourne

It's interesting to ponder the first time I first started to realise that we could question the state of affairs we're in. Not the teenage rebel who refuses to listen to his or her mum/dad telling them to clean their room. There was a realisation at some point that there are things going on bigger than ourselves which require solutions.

I remember listening to the first Rage Against the Machine album when I was 12. It was like any other afternoon after school with my cousin, but hearing the first brutal "Fuck you I won't do what you tell me" I was shocked. As we listened through the album, the anti-establishment message blasted through the speakers and seeped into our young minds where it would remain forever.

I wonder how many people have been drawn into left politics through music. Music makes it seem ok to question the nature of capitalism and our understanding of it at the time.

If writing the perfect revolutionary song was all we needed to overthrow capitalism wouldn't life be so much easier. Alas, no we must fight on. Here I want to take up some of your time to explore the role of left wing art and music and its relationship with how we organise in Melbourne today.

The personal relationships that music has with us are really important.

How can we communicate to each other? Our voices are many and varied and need to be heard however they are expressed. The formats of a lot of meetings and events on the left don't leave a lot of room for creativity. Why are we not using the amazing creative juices inside us to create and inspire? We are forever talking about creating a world free from the wage slavery, one where workers can just have the time and inspiration to free their minds to love, learn and create.

We need to start here and now! How can we be advocating for this 'new



society' without trying to have fun and be creative along the way.

One of the most effective combinations of music and politics is seen in benefit gigs for political causes. Earlier this year Renegade Activists organised a couple of fundraisers and I want to talk a little about some of the simple ways of organising them. I will focus here on the most successful one, both for the campaign and personally.

For me the relationship between music and politics is epitomised in the music of self proclaimed Revolutionary but Gangsta's Dead Prez.

From the first thumping beats of Dead Prez's 'Hip Hop' I was hooked, and as with all artists I love, I try and get as many others on board. Every party I went to had DP on the stereo, great beats to dance to and with lyrics like: 'We need a revolution the system ain't gunna change' it's teaching the people how to pimp the system, to fight back and organise.

It's one thing for music to introduce or reintroduce people to politics but it's not enough to just listen. We've got to throw ourselves into the movement, benefit gigs offer an opportunity to do this combining the passion of the music with an action to partake in.

The first point is asking people to be involved. This might seem very simple but you never know how far fetched an idea is if you keep it in your head. Dreams can only be realised once they are tried and trialled in practice.

It's fair to say we were interested in seeing them live, getting them to play a benefit show seemed like a fantasy (considering they'd never been to Australia for a start).

One afternoon in a beer fuelled haze on the veranda at the Trades Hall bar, Joe and I were trying to work out how we could finance Dead Prez coming to Australia to do some shows, the next day I read that Dead Prez had been added to the Big Day Out line up!

I can't say that all it took was to ask them and wham here is the DP show, it took a lot of emails, patience, phone calls, giving up, re-trying just to get



some confidence in pulling something off.

Having the belief that what you are doing will work is the first and most important aspect of organising. Too often we don't aim high enough. We need to take advantage of the venues, promoters, poster designers that we have on the left. We need to use our community to support each other and anything is possible. If you believe in what you are doing, those you are working with will as well.

As with the organisers of most big events the Big Day Out imposes stipulations on artists about playing other shows, so we couldn't have DP playing. We had to find another way to use Dead Prez and their political message. What we got was M1 giving a talk about racism, resistance and hip hop.

It took place on Invasion Day and to have a night of live local hip hop mixed with some great political chats by M1 and local Indigenous activist Robbie Thorpe made it a really special night.

Money is money and it certainly helps a campaign to be able to sustain itself. Although it seems that benefit gigs are just about raising money, it's not just about the money. There are lots of ways to raise money. What you should be aiming to get out of a benefit gig is an opportunity to raise more awareness of the cause, invigorate activists to keep fighting and showcase the talents of those performing.

It's so vital to tell our stories of struggle, to let people know they are not alone in their feelings of discontent with the world.

I love music, there is hardly a moment in my day that I'm not listening. It's powers are magical, it can transform your mood, help you find love on the dance floor or give you that boost you need to carry on being a revolutionary soldier.

James Brennan is an active member of RAAF and has been heavily involved in anti-racism campaigns.



By Seb Prowse

Why read a book in 2010? On the face of it, the question might seem hard to answer. If it's knowledge you seek, go to Wikipedia. If it's entertainment, download a movie. If you just want to look smart, buy a pair of non-prescription glasses.

The inexorable transition to e-publishing (and the rise of the DVD box set) may erode this in time, but what books alone still offer is the depth and immersiveness of 100,000+ finely crafted words.

For a bookseller, I don't read many books – one a fortnight, maybe. So when I do pick one up, I want it all: I want to escape into a world more exciting than my own; to be emotionally involved, educated and philosophically challenged; to feel like reading that book was the best damn thing I could have done with my time – with the possible exception of writing one half as good.

If it sounds like a tall order, you might be surprised – it happens quite often. Recently, two non-fiction works – E.H. Carr's biography of Bakunin and Joe Bageant's *Rainbow Pie: A Redneck Memoir* – have made just such an impact. But I want to start this reviews column by eulogising two works of fiction, *Q* by Luther Blissant and *Manituana* by Wu Ming. Both are historical novels of striking contemporary resonance. Both 'authors' are actually collectives who draw on similar groupings of anonymous Italian leftists.

Q (2000) pits two protagonists – a journeyman radical and a papal agent – in a mysterious battle of wits and faith which traverses numerous bloodbaths, failed utopias and assumed identities.

In fact written by the larger Luther Blissett group from which Wu Ming emerged, *Q* brings to life the utopian social/religious movements which arose during the Protestant Reformation of 16th century Europe. The



material basis for the split with Rome was the German Princes' desire to fill his own coffers rather than the Pope's. But the ideological breathing space created by Martin Luther's 95 theses was filled by radicals like the Anabaptist Thomas Muntzer, who preached "Omnia sunt communia": "Everything belongs to everyone."

In *Manituana* (2007), the Mohawk nation of the Iroquois league stand on the brink of oblivion as the American colonies fight for independence from Britain. To secure the alliance he believes will preserve their way of life, war chief Joseph Brant travels to the Empire's rotten core to meet King George III himself.

Four years ago Australian novelist Kate Grenville was accused of claiming to write history with her book *The Secret River*. While the form has obvious limitations in this regard, historical fiction of the kind Wu Ming are writing is both factually rigorous and imbued with the creativity of great art.

A heartbreaking pathos runs through both *Q* and *Manituana*, through these monumental human struggles which from the very beginning carry within them the inevitability of defeat. They are worth reading not just for the superlative entertainment they offer, but as inspiration for the fight today; perhaps even, from such tragic defeats, to learn how to win.

To finish with some good news: there's another Wu Ming novel, *54* (2002), their take on the Cold War. I'll curl up with that one when my folks pass out after too much Christmas lunch.

Seb Prowse is Co-ordinator of the New International Bookshop at Melbourne's Trades Hall. Most of the books he reviews are available there, unless he nabbed the last copy.



If test match cricket is “The gentlemen’s game” what does that make Twenty20?

What is now known as Cricket Australia first came together around 1892 to become an organising body for Australian cricketers. The founding members were the NSW and Victorian cricket associations. Interestingly, the South Australian delegates refused to join the board because the board denied the players any representation.

Cricket Australia is a bit like the Catholic Church refusing to move with the times and allow natural evolution to take place.

According to Cricket Australia CEO James Sutherland, “Cricket is a genuinely national sport and for that to continue into the future, we must ensure it remains a game for all Australians to access, to participate and to be involved in”. So why doesn’t the Northern Territory and ACT have teams in the domestic competition? The Canberra Comets came and went in the one day format in the 1990s. The absence of a Northern Territory team means that the area of Australia with the largest percentage of Indigenous people is simply not entitled to be involved. If Cricket Australia wants all Australians to be able to access and be a part of the game, it needs to look beyond the almighty dollar. (In 2008 cricket Australia’s revenue was a staggering \$146.4 million).

The first Australian cricket team to tour England was an all Aboriginal team back in 1868 well before the Ashes was born. But where are the Aboriginal players in the teams today? Jason Gillespie is the only Aboriginal player to make it to the Australian team. (The team that toured England has never been officially granted test status).

Eddie Gilbert was an outstanding fast bowler who toiled away for the Queensland team in the 1930s. He was often forced to take his meals away from the team on tour, while some team mates even refused to shake his hands after taking a wicket.



One of the few men to dismiss Bradman for a duck, Gilbert was unfairly branded a chucker and never made it to the Australian team.¹

The contradictions that come out of Cricket Australia (the governing body of Australian cricket) are startling. Cricket Australia announced on October 30th that there will be a new city based T20 league to begin in 2011/12 which I think is great (even though I much prefer test matches). But for a body that wants to be progressive and move into the future, there is some change happening but not enough. Earlier this year Pakistan-born Usman Khawaja became only the first Muslim to be selected in an Australian cricket squad.

Although Cricket Australia state that “The (new T20) competition will be owned, controlled and managed by Cricket Australia,” they also mention that “they have agreed to some form of private investment” in the teams. Are we not already saturated with ads enough through the cricket?

The winds of change may be blowing ever so slightly but a gale force of change is needed to re invigorate Australian cricket.

Attitudes in cricket need to change, an injection of youth in to the Australian make up would hopefully bring new ideas and new attitudes. The decision to finally appoint a full time selector in Greg Chappell is a step in the right direction. Clearly it is not a part time job! There are 3 formats of cricket being played and Australia picks a team for all of them yet they often seem to look very similar. The teams need to be picked on the merits of who are the best T20, Test and One day players for each team. Why not have different coaches for each team?

Unfortunately the channel 9 coverage is much the same, we are harassed to buy junk food and told about new shows by unexcited old men and it looks like we have another summer of Tony Greig and Bill Lawry. (I guess you can always put the ABC radio on with the TV on mute).

I am still looking forward to a summer of cricket. I’ve got my ticket to the



boxing day test and will try and watch as much as I can.

Any cricket lovers out there try and get to a Sheffield Shield match this summer it costs \$5 or \$2.50 concession and you'll see some great players at a bargain price.

For what it's worth here is my Australian team for the Ashes:

Shane. Watson

Phillip Hughes

Ricky Pointing (c)

Cameron White (v.c)

Usman. Khawaja

Andrew. McDonald

Tim. Paine (wk)

Peter.Siddle

Jason. Krejza

Mitchell. Johnson

Doug. Bollinger

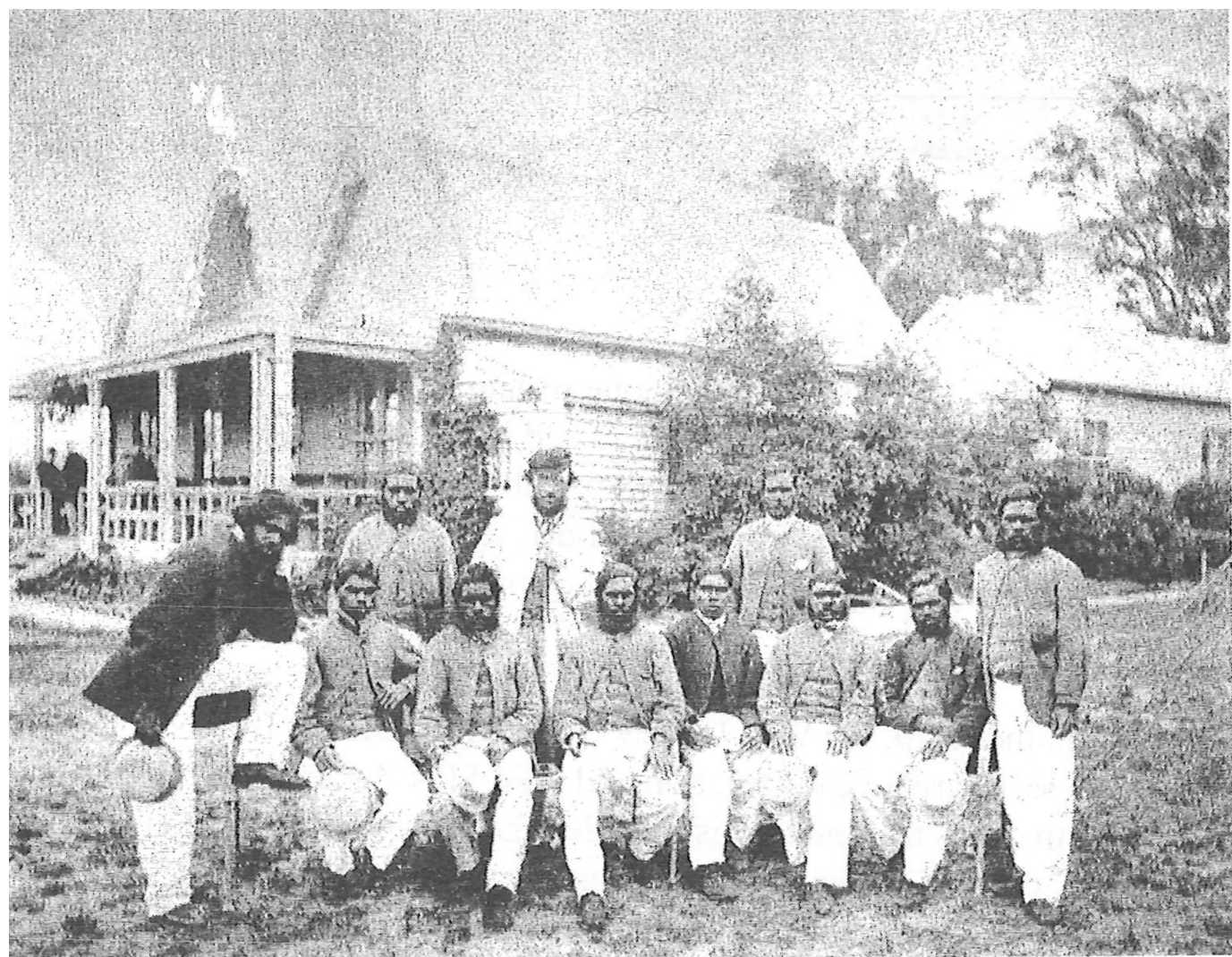
Shaun. Marsh 12th Man

By James Brennan,
Renegade Activist, cricket enthusiast.

(Endnotes)

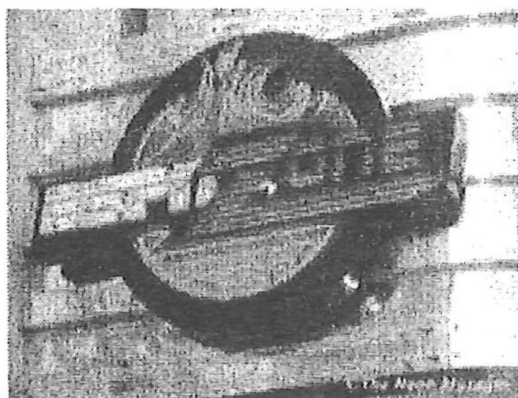
1 <http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2003/s898889.htm>; <http://www.greenleft.org.au/node/26436>





Boo Ya: United Workers Aim for ESPN Zone

By Dave Zirin



This article has been shamelessly lifted from Dave Zirin's website, dave@edgeofsports.com

When the ESPN (Sports Channel) Zone restaurant-chain shuttered most of its doors last June, eyebrows were raised in the business press. The restaurants had made bank ESPN brand with good food and of course, wall-to-wall sports. But as Rick Alessandri, senior vice president at ESPN put it at the time, "The economy has hit every facet of our country. We weren't immune."

ESPN's mother-ship, the Walt Disney Company, made the decision to engage in some creative destruction and the ESPN Zones were just part of the fat that was trimmed. This included the very popular locale in Baltimore's Inner Harbor. But there was one problem with this hard-nosed business decision: the 150 workers in Baltimore, shocked that their high-traffic restaurant closed, were told with less than a week's notice. Federal law, according to the Worker Adjustment and Retraining Notification (WARN) Act requires 60 days of notice and severance. Instead, the workers at ESPN Zone were given the bum's rush. Even worse, many didn't hear the wrenching news through their boss. Instead many found out their jobs were yesterday's news in the Baltimore Sun or even on Facebook.



Now the workers are fighting back and fighting mad. On Monday, October 25th, the former employee filed a class action lawsuit against ESPN's parent company Disney to get the Mouse to comply with the penalty associated with violating federal labor law. The penalty for violating the WARN Act requires that Disney pay workers for 60 days at the rate of their last paycheck. The severance that Disney offered, which is shameful, is separate from this penalty. Their attorney, Andrew D. Freeman said, "Disney's severance payments were inadequate as a matter of law and as a matter of human decency." The lawsuit also shines a spotlight on the most vulnerable people in today's economy: people who live day in and day out working non-union, service industry jobs that can be here today and gone tomorrow.

A cook at the ESPN Zone, Winston Gupton, was put out on the street after losing his job. Speaking at a June 30th press conference, Gupton said, "I never thought that a place that I dedicated myself to for 7½ yrs would reciprocate with such disrespect by shutting down with no notice at all. We were stunned. It was like walking through a dream. We were just devastated, and immediately, I had to figure out what I was going to do because I have a six year-old daughter that I take care of. I was even forced to find other living arrangements, because the income I was expecting during this busy summer season was now drastically diminished."

It would be comforting to think that the Winston Gupton story is his and his alone: a man who became collateral damage in this particular instance of cold corporate number crunching. But it's a story being told across the country. It is particularly common in the neighborhood where his former place of business rusts: Baltimore's Inner Harbor. The Inner Harbor is a collection of high brand, national restaurant-chains like the Cheesecake Factory and Phillips Seafood, built to capitalize on tourist dollars and close proximity to the publicly funded Oriole Park at Camden Yards and the home of the Baltimore Ravens, MB&T Bank stadium

There is a movement afoot to turn this tourist zone into a "Human Rights Zone" and it's being led by the same people who issued the class action suit on behalf the ESPN Zone employees: a group called the United Workers.



The UW is an organization of low-wage workers that was founded by homeless day laborers in 2002. Today they have a membership of hundreds of workers trapped in that world between steady work and abject poverty. Their goal is to enter agreement with the restaurant chains to ensure basic human rights standards for workers across the harbor, including living wages, healthcare, and education. When a chain abruptly shuts its doors, like they did at the ESPN Zone, the UW wants to be treated like workers and not disposable equipment. As Debra Harris, a former ESPN Zone cook said,

We are sending a message to Disney, ESPN Zone and Inner Harbor developers that private gain should not take precedence over human life. Corporate executives think they can break the law and just get away with it, because harbor developers do not enforce any human rights standards, but we are human beings and we have the right to dignity and respect.

Organizing the service industry has proven nationally to be a Sisyphean task for the AFL-CIO. But the independent United Workers have been successful in the past by waging highly visible grassroots campaigns, with the workers themselves in positions of leadership. They also relish taking on powerful corporations with national brands like ESPN and Disney, because they think by exposing the brand, they can get a seat at the table. Every corporation has a bottom line. The United Workers want to make sure there is at least some justice, dignity, and humanity in the process

Dave Zirin is the author of Bad Sports: How Owners are Ruining the Games we Love (Scribner). Receive his column every week by emailing dave@edgeofsports.com. Contact him at edgeofsports@gmail.com.



Melbourne Anti Intervention Collective

Meets every Monday at 6.30pm in the
New International bookshop at Trades Hall
[www.http://maicollective.blogspot.com/](http://maicollective.blogspot.com/)

Workers Solidarity Network

Meets monthly at Trades Hall
for more info: 0431 445 978
wsn.melb@gmail.com
[www.http://www.workerssolidaritymelbourne.org/](http://www.workerssolidaritymelbourne.org/)

City Is Ours

Meets fortnightly for more info:
contact@melbournecio.org
www.melbournecio.org

The New International Bookshop is located at Trades Hall

They hold meetings every Wednesday night at 6.30pm
Ph: 9662 3744
<http://www.newinternationalbookshop.org.au/>



R.A.A.F.



Renegade Activists are involved in a range of social and political campaigns around Melbourne.

From next year we'll be holding monthly meetings at our office in Trades Hall.

To get involved in any way or on any level with R.A.A.F send us an e-mail:

renegadeactivist@gmail.com